

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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FM AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8097

INFO AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY SEOUL

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

USLO PEKING

C O N F I D E N T I A L TAIPEI 0133

NOFORN

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, SHUM, TW

SUBJECT: FURTHER ACTION AGAINST TAIWAN POLITICAL REVIEW
STAFF?

REF: 75 TAIPEI 8213

1. SUMMARY: A GROUP OF LEGISLATORS HAS SUBMITTED TO THE EXECUTIVE YUAN A WRITTEN INTERPELLATION WHICH IS AIMED AT THE MONTHLY TAIWAN POLITICAL REVIEW AND URGES STRONG GOVERNMENT ACTION AGAINST RESPONSIBLE OFFICIALS OF MAGAZINES WHOSE ARTICLES HAVE GONE BEYOND THE LIMIT OF THE LAW. ALTHOUGH IT IS TOO EARLY TO PREDICT HOW THE GROG WILL RESPOND TO THE INTERPELLATION, A "SOFT" RESPONSE WILL DISAPPOINT CONSERVATIVE GOVERNMENT AND PARTY ELEMENTS, WHILE A SEVERE RESPONSE IS LIKELY TO STRAIN FURTHER GROG RELATIONS WITH INDEPENDENTS AND OTHERS AND DAMAGE THE IMAGE THE GROG IS SEEKING TO PROMOTE INTERNATIONALLY. END SUMMARY.

2. ALL JANUARY 6 NEWSPAPERS CARRIED REPORTS ON A WRITTEN INTERPELLATION SUBMITTED TO THE EXECUTIVE YUAN ON JANUARY 5
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BY 35 LEGISLATORS CONCERNING THE RECENT SUSPENSION OF A

MAGAZINE ALLEGED TO HAVE VIOLATED THE LAW AND AGITATED THE PUBLIC TO OPPOSE GOVERNMENT POLICY IN AN ARTICLE IN ITS DECEMBER ISSUE. ALTHOUGH THE INTERPELLATION APPARENTLY DID NOT SPECIFY THE MAGAZINE, IT IS CLEAR THAT TAIWAN POLITICAL REVIEW (TPR) IS THE TARGET. REPORTEDLY, THE INTERPELLATION STATED THAT ALTHOUGH THE MAGAZINE HAS RECEIVED ADMINISTRATIVE PUNISHMENT, THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD TAKE ACTION TO DECIDE WHETHER THE ARTICLE HAD BROKEN THE STIPULATIONS OF THE SPECIAL RULES OF THE SUPPRESSION ACTS AGAINST COMMUNISTS AND RELATED LAWS WHICH DEAL WITH RUMORS AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT THAT BENEFIT THE ENEMY. THE INTERPELLATION REPORTEDLY URGED THE GOVERNMENT TO TAKE SEVERE MEASURES AGAINST RESPONSIBLE OFFICIALS OF THOSE PUBLICATIONS WHOSE STATEMENTS HAVE GONE BEYOND THE LIMIT OF LAW.

3. ACCORDING TO THE PRESS, THE LEADER OF THE 35 LEGISLATORS, CHEN KU-YUAN (9115/7357/6678 AN 80-YEAR OLD RETIRED LAW ADVISER FOR TAIWAN GARRISON COMMAND), SAID THE INTERPELLATION WAS INTRODUCED BECAUSE THE STATEMENT OF A CERTAIN PUBLICATION HAS GONE BEYOND THE LIMIT OF THE LAW.

4. JANUARY 6-7 EDITORIAL COMMENT WIDELY SUPPORTED THE INTERPELLATION. THE JANUARY 7 SEMI-OFFICIAL CHUNG YANG JIH PAO EDITORIAL SAID THAT "MODESTY AND TOLERANCE DO NOT MEAN THAT THERE IS NO LINE BETWEEN RIGHT AND WRONG. THE GOVERNMENT HAS ITS CONSTITUTIONAL DUTIES AND THE RESPONSIBILITY DELEGATED TO IT BY THE PEOPLE TO INVESTIGATE AND TO HANDLE THE CASE IF ANYONE VIOLATES LAW WHEN HE EXERCISES RIGHTS AND FREEDOM, INCLUDING FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND PUBLICATION....FOR THE SAKE OF NATIONAL SECURITY AND SOCIAL ORDER, THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD NOT APPEASE AND THE PEOPLE SHOULD NOT TOLERATE ANYONE WHO ABUSES FREEDOM BECAUSE SUCH AN ACT WOULD ADVERTENTLY AND INADVERTENTLY HELP THE ENEMY."

5. THE EMBASSY HAS HEARD THAT ONE OF THE TPR STAFF MEMBERS, CHANG CHUN-HUNG (1728/0193/1347), IS EXTREMELY WORRIED THAT THE GROG MAY DECIDE TO TAKE ACTION AGAINST HIM. HOWEVER, IN CONVERSATION WITH EMBOFFS, INDEPENDENT LEGISLATOR AND TPR DIRECTOR KANG NING-HSIANG (1160/1380/4382), WHILE DISPLAYING SOME CONCERN OVER THE INTERPELLATION, EXPRESSED DOUBT THAT

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ANY OF THE TPR STAFF WOULD BE ARRESTED. HE EXPRESSED (WITH MORE HOPE THAN CONVICTION) HIS VIEW THAT THE PREMIER HAD NOT INITIATED THE INTERPELLATION AND SUGGESTED THAT MORE CONSERVATIVE ELEMENTS WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT AND PARTY WHO WISHED TO PROMPT THE PREMIER TO ACT HAD PUSHED THIS PROPOSAL.

6. COMMENT: THE EMBASSY DOES NOT KNOW WHO THE MOVING FORCE IS BEHIND THE INTERPELLATION, BUT THE REMARKABLY WELL-BALANCED

ROSTER OF SIGNATURES SUGGESTS THAT IT IS AN ORGANIZED MOVE BY SOME ELEMENTS TO PROMPT THE GROC TO TAKE FURTHER ACTION AGAINST TPR AND ITS STAFF. (SIGNATORIES INCLUDED 35 LEGISLATORS: 20 MAINLANDERS AND 15 TAIWANESE; 17 THREE-YEAR TERM LEGISLATORS AND 18 INDEFINITE TERM MEMBERS; 29 KMT, TWO YOUNG CHINA PARTY, TWO DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST PARTY AND TWO INDEPENDENTS.)

7. ANY DECISION ON WHETHER FURTHER ACTION WILL BE TAKEN AGAINST THE TPR STAFF WILL ULTIMATELY HAVE TO BE APPROVED BY THE PREMIER WHO IN MAKING HIS DECISION WILL FACE SUBSTANTIAL ALTHOUGH MANAGEABLE DIFFICULTIES. IF, AS IS LIKELY, THE CURRENT EFFORTS AGAINST TPR ARE BEING PUSHED BY MORE CONSERVATIVE ELEMENTS WITHIN THE PARTY AND GOVERNMENT WHOSE AT LEAST CONTINUING ACQUIESCENCE THE PREMIER NEEDS, HE MAY FEEL CONSTRAINED TO SHOW HE IS NOT TOO "SOFT" ON THE OPPOSITION. HOWEVER, SHOULD THE PREMIER APPROVE THE ARREST OF ANY OF THE TPR STAFF, HE WOULD FURTHER STRAIN RELATIONS WITH THE OPPOSITION AND POSSIBLY LOSE SOME SUPPORT AMONG THE YOUNG AND THE TAIWANESE WHOM HE HAS SUCCESSFULLY CULTIVATED IN RECENT YEARS. HE WOULD ALSO DAMAGE THE IMAGE OF TAIWAN AS A FREE AND OPEN SOCIETY WHICH HE IS SEEKING TO PROMOTE INTERNATIONALLY.

8. WHILE IT IS AS YET TOO EARLY TO PREDICT WITH CONFIDENCE WHAT ACTION THE GROC IN THE END MAY TAKE IN RESPONSE TO THE INTERPELLATION, IT IS VERY POSSIBLE THAT AT A MINIMUM THE GOVERNMENT WILL HARRASS STAFF MEMBERS, STOPPING SHORT OF ARREST. SINCE TWO OF THE THREE PRINCIPAL TPR BOARD MEMBERS ARE LEGISLATORS (KANG AND HUANG HSIN-CHIEH, 78060/07/0094), THE THIRD BOARD MEMBER, EDITOR CHANG CHUNG-HUNG, IS PARTICULARLY VULNERABLE.

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